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ABSTRACT

The first of two issues of the newsletter addresses issues of learning-disabled children and juvenile delinquency through three articles. The first, "Lost in the Juvenile Justice System: Learning Disabled Children and Juvenile Delinquency," by Jeffry Gallet, a learning-disabled judge, and Julie Gilligan, looks at misunderstandings and lack of services in New York. The next article, "Educational Outreach Through the Power of the Courts" by Thomas Olin, a learning-disabled Assistant District Attorney, describes a Bronx County program which identifies defendants needing educational and vocational assistance. The last two articles are "Learning Disabled Children In the Family Court System: An Advocate's Perspective" by Rita Horvath and "Special Education Students Have 'Dreams,' Too" by Arlene Mark. The second newsletter issue provides three articles on mainstreaming. "The Mainstreaming of Special Education" (Lawrence Gloeckler and Rebecca Cort), discusses the need to seek one continuum of both regular and special educational services and reports on reorganization and training efforts in New York. Next, "Mainstreaming: Designing a Model That Can Work" (Judith Fagin) describes one program which focuses on teacher awareness and training, service delivery, screening and evaluation, and curriculum design. The third article is "The Fisher-Landau Program: A Model Program for Educating Bright Children with Learning Problems in the Mainstream School Setting" by Susan Etess. (DB)

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Churchill Forum

CHURCHILL THE CHURCHILL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES, INC.

VOL. X NO. 1 WINTER 1987

Lost In the Juvenile Justice System: Learning Disabled Children & Juvenile Delinquency

by Jeffry H. Gallet and Julie Gilligan

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Maura Milligan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Picture this scene in Family Court. The courtroom is hot. The lawyers have been fighting a fiercely contested dispositional (sentencing) hearing. Shortly, the judge is going to have to decide whether the 15-year-old defendant is to be put on probation with supportive services or incarcerated in a state facility. It has already been established that the defendant is learning disabled.

The judge turns to the witness, an employee of the New York City Board of Education and asks this question, "Do you have programs for learning disabled children on the high school level?" Without a moment's hesitation the witness answers, "Yes, Judge. We have programs for learning disabled kids and all other retarded children."

That exchange really happened in Brooklyn Family Court in 1986. Presiding was Judge Jeffry H. Gallet, who happens to be learning disabled.

That scene, usually with the ignorance of learning disabilities less blatantly displayed, takes place daily in the courts of New York City.

Although a study done by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the United States Government found that more than a third of the children convicted of juvenile delinquency are learning disabled, in the City of New York today, children convicted of juvenile delinquency receive no consideration, or even a diagnosis, of their learning problems. The consequences are tragic.

The occupation of adolescence is school. That is what children do. In addition, the school is the center of a normal adolescent's social circle. So, the child dropping out of school changes entirely his or her social life. Dropping out of school is failure. It leads to lack of status and lack of direction—lack of something to do all day.

What do children do when they drop out of school? The girls become pregnant. Being a mother carries even more status than being a student. After all, everybody knows that mothers are very special people.

The boys steal or sell crack to survive. Many begin to use drugs themselves.

The tragedy, however, goes beyond the immediate consequences. Effectively, a school dropout ends his or her chance for a productive life at 14, 15 or 16 years of age. The social and financial consequences of school dropouts to society are intolerable. In an increasingly complex and technological work place, there is simply no place left for a "strong back." The day when a dropout could go west and trap furs or clear land and live by the sweat of the brow are over. If a person is unemployable there are only two means of support—public assistance or crime. Crime pays more and has higher status. We have an opportunity to identify and treat the highest risk teenagers in the juvenile court system. We have been squandering that opportunity.

The occupation of adolescence is school. That is what children do.

It is now generally accepted that there is a link between undetected learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency. The link has been formally recognized by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the American Bar Association and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Since 1983 the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities in New York City has funded a national training initiative bringing awareness about the LD/JD link to judges and attorneys, as well as probation and corrections officers. Even with the acknowledgement of this link, very little is being done.

Certainly there are isolated programs across the country. Chief Family Court Judge Tom McGee has established a very successful court school in Gretna, Louisiana, a bedroom suburb of New Orleans. Similar successful programs have been initiated in Russelville, Alabama; Toledo, Ohio; and St. Louis, Missouri. But they are no more than a drop in the bucket. Grants from the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities have produced two very important books. The first, under the sponsorship of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges by Judge Tom McGee and Adolescent Psychiatrist Dr. John Sikorsky, is a "bench book" on learning disabilities. The second, written under the sponsorship of the American Bar Association by attorneys Mathew B. Bogin and Beth Goodwin, is a handbook for attorneys representing learning disabled children.

The books have received an extraordinarily warm reception in the legal community. However, the Foundation faces a constant struggle raising money to keep these important volumes in print.

In the City of New York, there is no organized comprehensive testing program for learning disabilities in the school system and almost none in the juvenile system. An exception is a program recently begun to test high risk children in Brooklyn Family Court for learning disabilities. Chase Manhattan

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Educational Outreach Through The Power of The Courts

by Thomas G. Olin

It is becoming an increasingly well-known fact that on a national level, a high percentage of criminal defendants have literacy problems and/or are high school dropouts. A smaller percent but still significant number are learning disabled. Over 60 percent of the more than 45,000 cases that come through the criminal court system each year in the Bronx involve defendants who are illiterate; we estimate that approximately 40 percent of these defendants are learning disabled. As a district attorney's office, we do not have to offer educational programs to defendants, but we do, and we do so with pride. I hope that there will come a day when more emphasis is placed by government officials on programs of constructive prevention before a defendant develops a life of crime and it's too late.

The Educational Outreach Program: *WHY*

There are two basic reasons why we started the Educational Outreach Program for defendants. First, it is a known fact that there is a correlation between learning disabilities, school failure, and criminal behavior; far too many defendants in our criminal court system get caught in a revolving door. Second, as a district attorney's office, we have an obligation to the citizens of Bronx County to maintain law and order. Although jail is a means for protecting victims and maintaining laws, incarceration is not a long term solution to crime and, in fact, too often defendants come out of jail only to recommit crimes. The intention of the Educational Outreach Program, therefore, is to screen defendants on a case by case basis with the goal of bringing to those in need educational and vocational assistance. If one accepts the premise that education is an important factor in gaining self respect and meaningful employment then we have no choice but to use the power of the court system to develop strong educational diversion programs.

The Educational Outreach Program: *HOW*

In September 1987, the Bronx District Attorney's Outreach program, a full scale educational, tutoring, vocational and counseling program, was opened. Working together with the Rose F. Kennedy Center at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, we hired new staff (two special education teachers, one psychologist, one social worker, a vocational counselor, and a part-time family physician), and a building was rented and renovated for the program.

We presently work with 100 learning disabled defendants who have been screened by the Bronx Criminal Court. The defendants are given a 45 minute Learning Disability Screening Test, which operates on a scale of 0 to 10. If a defendant scores 0 to 4, he/she will not be accepted to the learning disabled part of our Outreach Program but will receive help through our regular Outreach Program: encouragement to return to a regular school or pursue a G.E.D. (General Equivalency Diploma) program; find a job, or to try to pull his or her life together. If a defendant scores 5 to 10 on the Learning Disability Screening Test, he or she is enrolled in the new learning center. Approximately 40% of our defendants fall between this 5 to 10 range.

At this point each defendant receives psychological, educational, psychiatric, psychosocial and medical evaluations. These evaluations take approximately 7 hours and are completed in one day to expedite the process and eliminate motivational difficulties that may arise when multiple evaluations are carried out. At this point, we eliminate from the program those learning disabled defendants who have drug problems, a family history of criminal acts, or grave psychological problems. Within one week of a defendant's evaluation, a set of educational and vocational interventions are devised and the defendant begins the program, which lasts for six months to one year.

Interventions

The *educational interventions* for each 100 defendants include classroom instruction and small group tutoring. Our tutoring program is open 9-5, Monday through Friday, 3 evenings a week, and 2 Saturdays a month. Each defendant attends about 12 hours of mandatory sessions each week. We try to create a constructive and meaningful schedule during which defendants can learn.

Based on the specific nature of his or her learning disability, each of our 100 defendants is placed into groups of 8 individuals which meet two to three times a week. A large percentage of these individuals also receive more individualized educational tutoring in clusters of 2-3 on a weekly basis.

The *psychosocial interventions* include individual and family counseling, treatment groups for the individual and, where appropriate, for his or her parent(s). Each defendant also attends a range of social problem-solving groups that meet weekly at the learning center.

The *vocational interventions* include couseling and job training. Individuals found to be "work capable" (able to work in the future but needing work counseling and training) attend weekly vocational groups. Individuals found to be "work ready" are assisted in finding employment and, once found, will have their progress monitored in individual and/or group sessions on an "as needed" basis.

A lack of basic skills can condemn one to a life of failure, frustration and ultimately, in some cases, crime. The troubles that develop during a youth's school years, if ignored, can become seriously aggravated in adult years if not addressed. We have a court system that is a revolving door for too many defendants. It is time to realize that there are defendants in our criminal court system with underlying problems that must be addressed if we expect them not to be rearrested. They must have skills. Clearly, too many are unable to deal with the pressures of society. The cycle of failures only increases when a defendant drops out of school. For the learning disabled, this often results in social problems, welfare dependency, drugs and crime. These unsolved problems bring a history of frustration, rage and hopelessness.

Too many victims suffer from the crimes of defendants. If we want fewer victims, then we must have fewer defendants. If we want fewer defendants, we must offer better opportunities. I invite readers of the *Churchill Forum* to visit our learning center. Come to the Bronx and see what we are doing: the center in action and the young adults we are attempting to help. Our success rate may be less than 100%, but it's a start. We can no longer afford to ignore this problem; the health of our city, state, and nation depends upon our efforts. ■

THOMAS OLIN is Assistant District Attorney in the Bronx. He is the Director of the Educational Outreach Program, established by District Attorney Mario Merola and himself in early 1986.

A Personal Postscript from Thomas Olin

For me, learning has always been a very frustrating experience. Starting in second grade, my parents noticed that I was having learning problems. Luckily, they were able to get me the help I needed. They brought me to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital where a doctor diagnosed my learning problems as dyslexia. Many of us know the pain and frustration that people with learning disabilities can have. I feel so fortunate to have been blessed with a mother and father who never gave up on me.

After I graduated from Fordham Law School, I began working for Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola. My boss is truly a great man who has rallied to the needs of the learning disabled caught up in the criminal justice system. Using funds from his budget we were able to establish our Educational Outreach Program. His leadership has been vital for the learning disabled defendant.

Credit: Christopher Raccioppi

Too many defendants in our criminal court system get caught in a revolving door.

DYSLEXIA

Two of the photographs in this issue of the *Churchill Forum* are the work of Christopher Raccioppi, nineteen years old, a talented and gifted student of art, and a dyslexic. They are drawn from a photographic essay entitled "Dyslexia," which he conceived in its entirety. This engaging and powerful work is available to readers of the *Forum* for $5. (and $1.50 to cover cost of postage and handling) and can be had by writing to Mr. Raccioppi, c/o RNR Educational Consultation, 124 Washington Street, Tappan, N.Y. 10983, (914) 359-9056.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

New subscribers are welcome. The **Churchill Forum** is available, at no charge, to anyone interested in learning disabilities. If you are not currently on our mailing list, please fill in and return the coupon below. Feel free to include the names and addresses of interested friends and colleagues.

Growing Pains

Tear

I am a tear.
Unbidden or abetted,
One of many shiny spheres.
Why?

Today

Please, dear momma, don't hit me today.
Conceived in love, why such hate?
Have I failed, am not what you'd expect?
I reach to make my mark, you place them
upon me. Reaching, digging deep within my soul.
How can I fail you, we are a part of each.
No, dear mother, you failed me.

Listen

Blinded to see, feigning disbelief, refusing conception.
Such things just don't happen?
Dear God I wish it true.
Where walls cry from within at night.
Weeping for it's children, having lived unloved.
It sees more than you.
Guardian of their fears, silent serving witness to their fears.

2"x4"s

2x4's build houses, also breaking homes.
Strike the frame, bruising mine.
sheath the frame, surrounding my heart.
Lay the plate, with trusses above.
roofing completes this fortress of hate.

Rights of Passage

School

Can you hear me? I'm speaking from within.
I am not of you.
In class I stand, a different caste, you cannot see my end.
I came to cause no trouble, learning lessons wrote.
I've studied yours, while crying to teach my own.
"couselors" question, providing no answers, paving paths unseen.
"emotionally disturbed," "developmentally disabled" you rate.
No, you cannot hear me. Screaming from within.

by Brant V. Sutphin

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"Spring Cleaning" in the Winter

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Gallet and Gilligan, *continued*

Bank has funded the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities for two years to design this model with Long Island University. Chase hopes that the project can become institutionalized in all boroughs of New York. An outstanding effort began last year, however, for first time LD adult offenders in the Bronx District Attorney's Office. This Outreach Program is coordinated by Thomas Olin, an attorney who is learning disabled. Nothing is yet happening in the juvenile court systems of Queens, Manhattan or Staten Island.

On October 17, 1987 Bronx District Attorney Mario Merola and the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities cooperated in a seminar entitled "Understanding Learning Disabilities" held at the Brooklyn Law School at the invitation of Dean David Trager. Judges, lawyers, probation and correction officers along with other persons from the juvenile and criminal court systems attended. The seminar was sponsored by the Association of Family Court Judges of the State of New York; Brooklyn Law School; the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities; the Bronx District Attorney's Office; William A. Shea, Senior Partner of Shea & Gould and by the law firm, Rogers & Wells. This innovative private initiative was a step forward in helping the Family Court deal with the problem of undetected learning disabilities.

Every day we delay in dealing with learning disabilities in the school system and in the juvenile justice system means that thousands of children are condemned to a life of poverty, despair and crime. This situation simply cannot be permitted to continue. Understanding learning differences is a concern of taxpayers, schools and an overburdened court system. Incarceration of a delinquent can cost $30,000 per year; a new trial for an adjudicated offender can cost the Court $10,000. Testing and remediation for LD will cost about $2500.

We must give the Family Court and the school system the resources necessary to help the thousands of LD children now going through the juvenile justice and school systems. To do otherwise is unthinkable. ■

DR. JULIE GILLIGAN is the Editor of THEIR WORLD, published by the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities. In 1986, she was the recipient of the first John Sevier Memorial Award given by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped for communicative efforts on behalf of handicapped children over the past ten years. In 1985 Dr. Gilligan was appointed by Governor Cuomo to serve on the New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group.

Special Education Students Have "Dreams," Too

by Arlene Mark

What makes the difference between a child who grows up to be a contributing member of society and one who "drops out"?

Many socio-economic factors combine to influence youngsters toward or away from productive lives, but a student's academic experiences appear to contribute greatly to the process. If a student has experienced largely frustration and failure, school cannot be viewed as the route to success. This student is at a high risk of dropping out of school and probably out of a productive life. Dropping out is generally not the student's true choice but simply the best way of removing himself from his situation . . . feeling incompetent because of inadequate academic skills. School therefore becomes a waste of time and dropping out hastens "independence."

Within the past year, many inner city graduating 6th grade classes have been adopted by concerned individuals as part of Eugene M. Lang's "I Have A Dream" Program. These students are guaranteed college tuition if they graduate from high school and receive emotional and academic support during their school years. While these fortunate students will certainly benefit form this extra support and advocacy, there are those who require much more from their remaining school years. These are students who have been classified as "Special Education" students and are at a significantly higher risk for dropping out than their peers in the mainstream.

Two 6th grade New York City classes that were adopted by "I Have A Dream" sponsors contained 25 special education students among the total of 145 youngsters. These special education students were evaluated. Could they improve their skills? catch up? graduate? Was it worthwhile to adopt, support, and follow these students rather than devoting the effort to other, more intact candidates?

When I was asked my opinion of the "potential" of these students, I responded that one could not look at the collective potential of the class. It was made up of individuals and very possibly included future leaders: merchants, artists, nurses, teachers, computer technicians. That these students had become alienated toward school seemed to be reason enough to give them a chance to change their attitudes and goals. In addition, the self-evident belief that adolescents want to be good at something, to be valued, and to be able to live independent lives, was another reason to provide support. The challenge was especially compelling because of my professional work as school psychologist with juvenile offenders, many of whom had come through the school system as "special education" students. The similarities between the juvenile offenders and the 7th graders were striking: low self-esteem, school failure, and little sense of a positive future achieved through education.

Understanding that the first priority of these special education students was to start to "catch up," my husband and I realized our major task was to help reverse the discouragement they felt and to convince them that they were capable of learning and could indeed achieve their dreams. But what were their dreams? We soon found out.

We began in September of 1986 by assembling the students and simply asking them what it meant to have a dream. Some responses were, "to do something you never thought you could," or "to get something like magic."

And what were some of their dreams? "To be an electrician, a bus driver, a policewoman, a construction worker, a lawyer, a football player, a nurse, a boxer, a factory manager, a doctor."

What might get in the way of making these dreams come true . . .? "Work is too hard," "friends tell you to stay out of school," "repeating the same grades over and over," "losing interest," and "feeling you're not like your friends."

This conversation between the "Dreamers" and my husband and me was very important because while their dreams were very real, their deep uncertainties about their futures were more immediate and constituted a great risk to the fulfillment of those dreams. What were the risks? I thought again and again of the histories of the young men referred for juvenile offenses with whom I worked professionally. A majority of these adolescents had begun truanting in the 7th grade and followed peers into criminal activities on the streets. In school many of them fought and defied

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THE HONORABLE JUDGE JEFFRY GALLET is associated with the Family Court of the State of New York—Manhattan. Judge Gallet, who has several learning disabilities including dysgraphia (difficulty in writing), is the author of five books on civil-law procedure. He is Special Lecturer at the Columbia University College of Physicians-Surgeons.

Note: This is the second article written on the LD/JD Link by New York State Family Court Judge Jeffry H. Gallet and Julie Gilligan, Ph.D., Director of Communications & Public Affairs at the Foundation For Children With Learning Disabilities. The *National Law Journal* published "Special Youths Need Special Treatment" on February 16, 1987.

Learning Disabled Children In The Family Court System: An Advocate's Perspective

by Rita Horvath

We know that there is a definite connection between the learning disabled child and the child who is adjudicated a delinquent or a status offender. A learning disabled child is twice as prone to be adjudicated either a status offender or a delinquent . . . [It] makes sense, that if you have a child who by definition has average or better than average intelligence and that child is being told by his peers, teachers and parents every day of his life that he is a dummy, or that he is lazy or that he is this and that, then the child is going to start thinking that this is true. [Such children's] self-esteem is going to go down. They, in effect, are going to drop out. They're going to get away from this pain. They're going to go out and start associating with other kids who have similar problems . . . and who are getting involved in the judicial system. They're more prone to run away and become "status offenders." They're simply escaping the pain.

—JUDGE THOMAS MCGEE
Jefferson Parish, La.

Johnny hates ti because eh knows nodoby understands what he's going through.

Credit: Christopher Racciopp

Each school promises help, but in the end there is only disappointment.

Manuel may be the most seriously learning disabled child I have met in the juvenile justice system in the 12 years that I have worked as an education advocate for the Juvenile Rights Division of the Legal Aid Society. At 14, Manuel, whose I.Q. test results were within normal limits, was reading at first grade level. He could print his first name, but reversed letters in his last name. A good-looking, quiet, alert young man, Manuel looked "normal" walking down the street with his friends. But now he was sitting in my office, hearing his mother complain that she would send him to the store for three pounds of ground meat and a loaf of bread, and he would return with a pound of meat and three loaves of bread. "I get mixed up when I get to the store," Manuel told me with a sheepish grin. "I remember the things, but I mix up the numbers."

We talked about Manuel's school history. Manuel's inability to learn to read had become clear to school personnel by the third grade; he had been evaluated and placed in a special education class for learning disabled students in the fourth grade. He still did not learn to read. He began to opt out of school—to truant. "I gave them a chance," he told me, "but nothing happened." Recently, he had been placed in a special school for students with severe behavior management problems—recommended, according to the records, because of the inability of his previous school to "engage" him (to convince him that it was worth his while to attend). His mother had not been pleased when she took him to the new school to register, sure that this was not the environment in which he finally would learn to read. She requested a different school, preferably a residential school, but was refused. Not seeing any choice, she accepted the recommended placement. Manuel attended for a week, then stopped going.

Now they were in Family Court. His mother had filed a Person-In-Need-of-Supervision (PINS) petition, charging Manuel with truancy, staying out late, and failure to obey her. She suspected he was becoming involved with drugs. Having been refused a residential school placement by the Board of Education, she was now asking the Court to provide such a placement, or to force the Board of Education to do so.

Three weeks later, Manuel was arrested for possesion of "crack" and cocaine. Now he was a juvenile delinquent, before the court on two cases simultaneously (the JD and the PINS), facing pre-trial detention in a juvenile center and placement in a state facility for delinquent youth.

Though Manuel's learning disability is particularly severe, his story is not unusual: his frustration, and that of his mother, with the succession of classes and schools, each promising "help" but in the end, only disappointing them; the eagerness with which they accept each new recommendation of the school "experts"; his desire to learn to read, but his growing certainty that he never will; his increasing involvement in acting-out and anti-social behavior; the desire of his mother to find placement for him out of the city before he gets into real trouble in the streets and winds up in jail or dead. All these are common elements in the juvenile delinquency-learning disabilities syndrome as we see it on a daily basis as advocates for children in court.

Another common element appears in Manuel's case. Although initially certified as learning disabled, by adolescence Manuel had progressed to a special school for children whose primary han-

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Mark, *continued*

authority. Others were ungovernable and frequently stayed away from home for lengthy periods. In psychological testing and group therapeutic sessions, I listened to the juvenile offenders talk about many issues. One significant issue was being in "special ed." To many of the boys, that meant learning the same things year after year, and feeling that non-special ed peers considered them 'different' and 'dumb.' Another message the adjudicated youths communicated was that teachers were not teaching them what they sensed that they needed for "the real world." They didn't see the relevance of their learning and believed their teachers did not understand them or their needs to meet financial, family, and social requirements. They refused to remain in a situation that did not seem to make sense for their lives.

Interestingly, upon first inspection of the reasons the "Dreamers" were referred to special education classes, we learned that the description of their conduct, motivation and attitude were almost precisely the same as that describing juvenile offenders: "frequent altercations with staff and classmates, challenge of authorities, difficulty sitting still in class, lacking self-esteem, low frustration tolerance, poor attendance, suspension," and others.

It appeared clear that the "Dreamers" were headed for the same fate as more hardened juvenile offenders unless they very quickly had some means to experience success other than that found in the streets.

Our immediate goal was to get to know each student and let each of them get to know us. We did this by meeting repeatedly with groups of 6 or 7 on Saturday mornings where we engaged in activities such as mirroring (copying each other), creating and naming paper constructions and dramatizing feelings. After an initial coolness, it was especially interesting to observe these adolescents perform effectively and sensitively. Somewhat to our mutual surprise, they experienced themselves as being competent and had fun.

Afterwards, we would walk to McDonald's where several of the students would be given the responsibility for ordering lunch. My husband would assign tasks, "You're in charge of drinks, you the food, and you the bill" and off ran the hungry "Dreamers" to do their jobs. They showed competence and real interest in this minor but very relevant activity, getting orders correct, distributing the food and helping calculate and pay the bill. It was apparent that the students felt proud of helping and enjoyed friendly conversation with each other.

Our next step was to begin to develop in our students the academic skills they lacked and to do it by calling upon whatever strengths they already possessed. We did not simply want more rote lessons, but innovative, active learning through tutor involvement. Now that the students had articulated their dreams, we could begin to relate the need for skills to achieve those dreams. We worked with professionals from the Bank Street College Department of Special Education and soon matched professional graduates to individual "Dreamers." Learning specialists and students began one-on-one work together on Saturday mornings. First projects included tasks such as taking apart and reassembling a toaster, dissecting a fish and writing names of all the parts and working on students' time lines. The Center was filled with students learning, doing, describing.

Learning specialists wrote to students' classroom teachers, pointing out students' strengths and reviewing the learning covered. Teachers were invited to respond, describing students' work habits and classroom curriculum.

Saturday sessions also included time for "Dreamers" to role play, create and develop stories through chosen characters. "Prince Mark and Princess Juliet were sitting on the grass in front of their 110 room castle. . .

Juliet: 'I'm bored.'
Mark: 'Me, too.'
Juliet: 'I'm more bored than you are.'
Mark: 'No, you're not.' . . . etc."

While initial stories revolved around the theme of competition, many positive outcomes were evident. Students learned through seeing typed pages of their own words that their ideas created interesting stories that had a beginning, middle and end, one in which they could determine what happened to the characters which they themselves had created. They felt the therapeutic effects of creating a fantasy and living in it through their characters. They also learned the necessity of language facility and reading ability.

Learning through pleasurable interactions with nurturing role models and exciting tasks seemed to be the most immediate and pratical way to motivate our special ed Dreamers and it appeared to be working.

All of the year's efforts culminated in a final tutoring morning followed by awards for effort and achievement. Dreamers with improved grades, behavior and attendance earned one-month paid work internships at Colgate-Palmolive Company, my husband's place of employment. Each of the Dreamers' work experience at Colgate was different. Jobs included work in Human Resources, the Audio Visual Department, Company Store, stocking and selling merchandise, and the Receiving Department, making deliveries.

Before the Dreamers arrived on the job, several department heads were selected as mentors, and were asked to write up brief job descriptions of what the Dreamers could productively accomplish in their particular departments. Then my husband and I met with all the mentors and discussed the strengths and learning needs of each Dreamer. Dreamers and jobs were matched to create the best fit possible.

Dreamers began their work experience with an orientation meeting with the mentors/supervisors who explained the work in each department, time schedules, lunch procedures, and other logistics. Then off they went for I.D. cards to begin their adventures.

Every Friday, Dreamers and their supervisors met with my husband and me to review the week. Praise was exchanged as accomplishments and positive work habits were broadcast widely: "Mariza handled most assignments with 95% accuracy"; "Elliot is an excellent worker and takes his time to make sure he's doing the work right"; "Anxious to work and completes whatever work he is assigned"; "Will take things upon himself that need to be done"; "Good-natured, verbal, active"; "Controlled, intelligent"; "Brightens the day for us with his witty sayings and actions"; "Likes to learn new things and then quickly adapts."

Naturally some negatives surfaced, but the disapproval of the group seemed to help alter behavior and peformance in subsequent weeks. Overall, the "reviews" were good and got better as the weeks progressed.

These positive comments were very different from the school evaluations which referred the students to special education classes because they could not keep up with mainstream classroom demands. Could it be this simple to eliminate negative behavior by changing environment and expectations? For some Dreamers, changing those two factors did indeed make a significant difference. Dreamers experienced a sense of belonging, power through competence, as well as good fun. They saw what it means to behave appropriately in a social setting, in this case, the workplace, and receive deserved praise.

For a few Dreamers, however, these factors were not enough. Their self-esteem and interpersonal skills were so fragile that they were unable to take directions objectively. One student was incapable of working one-on-one with his supervisor on a cooperative basis. This student's past experiences had taught him to defy authority and in his present loosely structured situation, he simply could not adjust, consistently straying from the job and returning to the familiarity of his peers in other areas of the building. He behaved innappropriately, and we were forced to consider terminating his internship. As a last resort, we assigned him to

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Mark, *continued*

a department where he had rigid structure and could work with a clearer understanding of specific tasks, rules and boundaries. The student flourished in this new environment and completed his internship successfully.

Another student's personality "changed" when he was around his peers, according to his supervisor. "He was compelled to prove he was a tough guy." As the student earned praise for his efficient work in the department, he began to listen for the praise and grew through this experience.

There are many more stories involving intitial defiance, attempted theft, and inappropriate behavior. However, there are even more positive outcomes—of support, friendship based upon mutual new found interests, and especially new found motivation to one day have a good job. Thus, our concerns about academic skills were intensified. Reading, writing and verbal expression were undeveloped in most of the Dreamers. While these internships at Colgate-Palmolive Company were tailored to capitalize on strengths, we knew that the students would need communication skills to enter the competitive job market. And in order to develop such skills, they must have positive learning experiences in school. They must experience real achievement and realize how academic and social skills directly affect their futures.

Our Dreamers have tasted what it feels like to be valued in the 'mainstream.' There were no special education exceptions or limitations during their brief internships.

Looking back, what has taken place from September 1986 through November 1987 is that many discouraged students have begun to see a glimmer of hope of "achieving." They are beginning to develop competence and self-confidence and to improve their ability to avoid confrontation. We are still a long way from achieving our goal of having each Dreamer get where he or she wants to go. But there has been a hopeful start. ■

ARLENE MARK has worked with Special Education students in a variety of settings, most recently as School Psychologist at Lincoln Hall, a residential treatment center for juvenile offenders in Lincolndale, New York. She has an M.A. in Special Education from Manhattanville College and a Master's certification in School Psychology from the College of New Rochelle. She and her husband, Reuben, have adopted an "I Have a Dream" class of Special Education students currently attending Junior High Schools 22, 25, 56 and 60 in the Lower East Side of New York.

Credit: Norm Ivers

Arlene and Reuben Mark and their "Dreamers."

Horvath, *continued*

dicapping condition is emotional disturbance and who require intensive social behavior control. This specialized environment, according to the Board of Education, provides "a highly intensive management system which operates within individual classrooms, within the school building, and within activities conducted in the community" (*Educational Service for Students with Handicapping Conditions,* New York City Board of Education, 1985). This service category provides systematic management and supervision throughout the day; instruction focuses on appropriate functioning in school and the community. Academic competencies come *third* in the list of four programmatic goals: the first two are personal behavior skills (self-control) and social skills (behavior for school and work adjustment).

Thus, the student's learning disabilities, no matter how severe, unhappily become secondary to the primary need of the school system to manage behavior in order to ensure order. The cart is now firmly before the horse: behavioral goals *precede* learning goals, rather than the opposite order, in which academic success and improved self-esteem would be used. Acceptable behavior must come first: teachers and principals insist upon it.

The result of this scenario is a rising spiral of pain and frustration. As the child increases his acting-out behavior, parent, school and community become less and less sympathetic to the underlying problem, and, finally, unwilling to tolerate the disturbance represented by the child: impulsivity, poor judgment, failure to respond to the "help" that is offerred. The child is "incorrigible," "delinquent," "antisocial." Result: placement in a facility for delinquent youth. Learning disability? Well, maybe, but that's no excuse. If the child lacks internal behavior controls, then control must be imposed externally. Behavior *must* improve. The safety of the community is at stake. ■

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The Churchill Center for Learning Disabilities, the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities and Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc., have recently issued a Proceedings Report of the Conference "Face to Face: Exploring Vocational Options for Young People with Learning Disabilities."

A copy of this report can be obtained from the Churchill Center for Learning Disabilities, 22 East 95th Street, New York, N.Y. 10128. There is a $2.00 postage and handling fee.

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Dear Reader:

This issue of the *Churchill Forum* considers the timely topic of the link between undetected learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency. This link is made only too clear through the analyses of our several contributors, whose personal experiences as educator, judge, therapist, lawyer, and social worker confirm our belief that changes in the system must be made—and soon.

Harry S. Valentine III

Harry Valentine
Founder
The Churchill School
for Learning Disabilities

Churchill Forum

CHURCHILL THE CHURCHILL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES, INC

VOL. X NO. 2 SPRING 1988

The Mainstreaming of Special Education

by Lawrence C. Gloeckler and Rebecca H. Cort

In the decade since Public Law 94-142 codified the standards which govern the delivery of special education services in this country, we have seen a massive call for the creation of and access to special educational services. For the numerous mild and moderately handicapped students, of whom the learning disabled constitute the greatest proportion, this call has, over time, had the unintended result of creating a new educational system within the old system. In other words, special education has become, in many places, an island separated from the educational mainland. In addition, within the special education island, there has not been enough attention to accountability regarding the effectiveness of programs for children identified as educationally handicapped and to the assurance of access, not just to programs and services, but to *quality* programs and services. As a result, many learning disabled students have drifted further and further from the educational mainstream, not so much in regard to the location of the delivery of services but, even more critically, in regard to their attainment of the academic and vocational competencies which are expected of their non-handicapped peers and which are generally prerequisites for independence and success in adult life.

To address this problem, educational professionals, advocates, and parents at all levels (federal, state, and local) have begun to formulate a new goal, one which de-emphasizes the separate continuum of special education services and instead seeks one continuum of educational services within which all students are guaranteed service and mobility. In order to attain this goal, there must be changes in the system at several levels. First, we must ensure that there are adequate options for students experiencing temporary or minimal learning difficulties *prior* to a referral to special education. In addition, for most of those who have been classified as handicapped, the range of service available must parallel that available to non-handicapped students with a concomitant goal of both a high school diploma and sufficient skills to permit productive, independent functioning as an adult. In other words, if all students are to have the opportunity to be educated in the "least restrictive environment" and to benefit from that education, we must begin a process of specializing regular education and regularizing special education.

Credit: N. Ivers

All students should have the opportunity to be educated in the "least restrictive environment."

How is this goal to be accomplished? Within New York State there have been a number of significant statutory, regulatory, and policy initiatives which have begun to redirect and refocus our educational system in the direction described above. These initiatives require attention to many different points on the educational continuum ranging from the pre-referral stage, through the provision of special education services and, finally, to the point of a student's declassification and return to a full mainstream program.

To begin at the pre-referral stage, the most effective way of guaranteeing any student access to the mainstream program is to prevent the need for that student to leave it. Recognizing that, under the right circumstances, the increasing number of referrals to special education might be unnecessary, the New York State Legislature enacted statutes in 1986 which provided funds to districts for the provision of certain types of counseling, psychological services, social work services, and speech improvement services within the regular education system. It is hoped that these monetary incentives will begin to reverse the flow of services out of regular education and permit short-term school based interventions without resorting to the unnecessary trauma of evaluation and classification for those who are not truly educationally handicapped.

It has also been recognized that there are children who are referred to and recommended for special education but, who over time, should be able to return to regular education. However, districts have complained that the reentry process is very difficult without some transitional support for both students and their regular education teachers. As a result, the legislature has provided additional funding for Declassification Support Services to provide school districts, for the first time, with the resources to help both the students and their mainstream teachers during the first year of transition from special education to full-time regular education. These services may include psychological and/or social work services, speech and language services and non-career counseling, as well as

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Mainstreaming: Designing a Model That Can Work

by Judith Fagin

Some classroom procedures are by their very nature troublesome for children with learning difficulties. Consider Sam G., a third grader at a mainstream school in Brooklyn, New York. Several months ago he was referred for testing and was diagnosed as having some specific learning disabilities. The tester felt that "given the proper support system a self-contained classroom would not be indicated at this time and, that he could remain at his present school."

Sam, whom teachers describe as "bright and sensitive" had been "slow to learn to read," "seemed somewhat lost and distracted," and generally "seemed to need more time than other students did to organize his responses in class."

Sam, it seems, was lost during whole group discussion, and urgently needed flexible pacing and a teacher who would take his particular learning style into consideration.

How can this be accomplished? How can a mainstream school insure that its students are receiving personalized and appropriate instruction and support? How can administrators in mainstream schools who are committed to educating learning disabled students build a network with those staff members who share the responsibility for their success? Fortunately, these very complex issues are beginning to be addressed by a number of mainstream schools.

During the past three years, The Churchill Center for Learning Disabilities in New York City has been asked by several independent schools in the area to offer specific recommendations for developing more effective services and instructional techniques for learning disabled students who are trying to cope with a mainstream school.

In an effort to understand the issues confronting each of these schools the Churchill Consultancy Team, comprised of Churchill staff members, spends approximately 2 weeks interviewing administrative staff; observing and speaking with classroom teachers, LD specialists, and the school psychologist; and meeting with students and parents. Special attention is focused on the academic, psychological and educational profiles of all students demonstrating learning difficulties in the classroom.

The Churchill Team focuses on four areas critical to the development of a successful mainstream program for learning disabled students:

I. Teacher Awareness & Training
II. Service Delivery to Students who are Learning Disabled
III. Screening and Evaluation
IV. Curriculum Design

Teacher Awareness and Training

We begin each consultancy by focusing on teacher awareness and training, because the classroom teacher is often the first individual to observe academic/social differences in a child. Teachers are by nature "child-watchers," and their skillful observations can provide essential information to the LD specialist, school psychologist and parent. Cognizant of the central role that teachers must play in the identification of and adaptation to a wide range of learning styles, the Churchill Team considers several essential components that are part of the process of understanding students and helping them to learn.

- Are classroom teachers knowledgeable about the subtleties and range of manifestations of learning disabilities?
- Does the classroom teacher work effectively with the natural range of learning styles and abilities in the classroom.
- Do teachers receive ongoing education in the area of learning disabilities?
- Are there resources available to the teacher to help modify curriculum, homework assignments, or other school routines, (such as the possiblity of untimed tests)?

The Churchill Team strongly encourages regular training workshops to help sensitize teachers to the problems and needs of the learning disabled child in the mainstream classroom.

Some of the workshop topics will emerge organically from staff needs. Other areas of exploration might include:

- Identifying children at risk
- Understanding test results and how they can be used in planning a curriculum for the LD child
- Developing an understanding of children's different learning styles
- Modifying and adapting curriculum to meet the needs of children
- Matching curriculum to the developmental stages of students
- Creating a balance between group cohesiveness and the individual needs of children in the group
- Organizing classrooms for maximum learning potential
- Maximizing the classrooms physical environment; record keeping; establishing and maintaining limits within the classroom

Service Delivery to Students Who Are Learning Disabled

Crucial to developing a program for students with learning disabilities is the selection of a qualified and imaginative learning specialist. Key qualifications include a thorough understanding of the cognitive, psychological and developmental issues that face students with learning disabilities.

This specialist would need an understanding of language development, a wide repertoire of teaching approaches and methods, and the ability to be knowledgeable and comfortable in classroom instruction. In addition, there exists a need for an in-house team of specialists (e.g., learning disabilities specialist, psychologist) who would, in an ongoing way, work with children, teachers, parents and administrators. This team would help identify children at risk, do initial screening, and refer out for additional testing as indicated.

In plannng for and evaluating comprehensive LD service delivery, the following should be considered: is the LD specialist—

- Coordinating testing and evaluation procedures that include: testing students; meeting with teachers and parents to share results and making recommendations; making outside referrals as necessary?
- Communicating regularly with the administration about progress of LD students and when appropriate, arranging case conferences with outside support personnel, faculty and administration?
- Working with teachers to modify homework packets and class exams if and when necessary?
- Following at-risk and identified learning disabled children from year to year; updating their folders and acting as their advocates with teachers, parents and administrators?
- Being available to parents as a resource person regarding management problems, appropriateness of tutoring and the special personal and emotional needs of the LD child?
- Maintaining a current file of available outside professionals to whom students and their families can be referred for educational and psychological testing, tutoring in subject areas and educational therapy?
- Reviewing all records and information on any incoming student with any indication of academic difficulty. Evaluating these candidates and referring them for additional testing as necessary?
- Writing a brief profile on each LD student to be made available to teachers each fall? (This profile should include areas of strengths and weaknesses and include optimum learning styles for each LD student).
- Communicating regularly with outside tutors and therapists? (The purpose of this contact is to ensure coor-

continued on Page 3

Credit N. Ivers

The classroom teacher is often the first individual to observe academic/social differences in a child.

Fagin, *continued*

dination of services provided to students both in and out of school. Outside tutors can also be more effective when they have information about school requirements and school progress and lack thereof).

Utilizing these skills and information, the learning specialist can offer a unique opportunity to students, teachers and parents by helping them to develop new strategies and ideas.

Screening & Evaluation

Essential to the effectiveness of any program is the need to identify children at risk. Thus, the Consultancy Team also evaluates the school's capability to detect, evaluate, test and diagnose learning disabilities within the general school population. The following are significant issues:

- Do any students enter the school with identified learning problems?
- Are potential at-risk nursery and kindergarten students identified?
- What screening procedures (if any) are used in the school to identify specific learning problems in grades 1 - 6.
- At what point is outside testing recommended?
- How is the distinction made between behavioral and cognitive issues?

Early identification, expert testing and the involvement and education of staff and parents will save anguish later on. Excellent diagnostic/prognostic procedures are essential. Reports must do more than offer a general impression of a child's weaknesses. They must also convey a child's areas of strengths and specific learning style. To understand a child through composite scores rather than through an individualized learning profile is unfortunate for all children, not just the learning disabled.

Curriculum Design

The final adjustment that can be made in a mainstream school is the modification of curriculum. The Consultancy Team evaluates the following factors to determine if curriculum design and development is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities:

- How and by whom is curriculum developed in the school?
- Is the curriculum developmentally based?
- Are modifications in curriculum made within the regular classroom to accommodate different learning styles? If so, what kinds of modifications are made?
- What, if any, distinctions are made between skills development and cognitive ability?
- What is the range of materials available within the classroom?
- Do classroom teachers have their own repertoire of flexible curriculum?

Upon completion of its evaluation, the Churchill Consultancy Team meets with school personnel to discuss specific recommendations. Every attempt is made to tailor these recommendations to the culture and needs of each individual school and its student body.

Clearly, not all changes can or should be implemented immediately. Schools are encouraged to implement changes slowly and in stages. In addition, Churchill staff members continue to meet with teachers and administrators to refine and modify plans as needed.

This final "refinement stage" is perhaps our greatest challenge as we walk the fine line between "what has been" and "what can be."

The staff of the Churchill Center for Learning Disabilities feels privileged to have had an opportunity to develop linkages with other institutions who appreciate the shared responsibility for working with learning disabled students. Ultimately we have all come to understand that working with individual learning styles and needs underlies all good teaching and enhances the learning experience of all children. ■

JUDITH FAGIN is the Director of the Churchill Center for Learning Disabilities in New York City and a private educational consultant. The other members of the Churchill Team are Marsha Kessler, Esther Kramer, Ellen Taylor, and Claire Wurtzel.

The Fisher-Landau Program A Model Program For Educating Bright Children With Learning Problems In The Mainstream School Setting

by Susan Etess

Within nearly every classroom in every school in our country, there are a group of children whose true potential and abilities are most often hidden from their teachers. These children may have extraordinary talents and abilities but often struggle greatly in order to learn. They may become frustrated trying to learn, as well as be a source of great frustration for their teachers and parents. These are the bright children with learning problems, whose unique talents and abilities often go unnoticed and who can be overshadowed by their apparent poor school performance, perceived lack of interest in learning, overt acts of frustration, or overpowering feelings and signs of lack of success or failure.

Children with learning differences are estimated to comprise at least 10-20% of our school population. They are a great challenge to our educational system and, perhaps, represent the most creative minds and leaders of the future. As educators, we must embrace the important challenge of successfully educating these students. They need teachers who believe in their future success and potential, instead of focusing on their weaknesses. They require schools that are committed to educating them in a caring, individualized and exemplary fashion.

Over the past decade, research in the fields of education related to learning disabilities has been burgeoning. Educators now have access to much new knowledge about the differences and complexities of how people learn. This research appears to indicate that many previously labeled "problem learners" are, in fact, very bright and often possess unique talents. Many of these children can and should be educated in a mainstream school setting. Special schools or classrooms and "pull-out" programs often do not provide adequate opportunities for such children to learn and flourish.

For years, schools have tried to teach children with a wide range of learning profiles and styles, though lacking enough specific knowledge about how most successfully to educate such children. Educators, with good intentions, have found themselves teaching children who then sometimes begin to fail. Determining why children are not learning can be a complex and time consuming process—time children spend failing, which can leave serious emotional scars on sensitive and otherwise capable children. As educators, why should we wait for children to fail and then ask why? Why not look carefully at these children as learners during their early school years and try to determine the best programs for them from the onset of their education?

For the past three years, The Dalton School, an academically challenging independent school in New York City, has been developing a model program to educate bright children with learning problems in mainstream classrooms. This project was generously funded by the Fisher-Landau Foundation. The program began with two major goals: (1) early identification of children with potential learning problems, so that these children might receive a successful and well matched educational program as early as the nursery years, and (2) training for all teachers to help them better identify, understand, teach and plan programs to meet the needs of these special learners within a regular school setting. At present, the Fisher-Landau Program at Dalton serves students three years old through grade three, with plans to expand up through the high school years in the near future.

The Early Childhood Years

Initially the program focused on the early childhood years, trying to identify trends that would be indicators of future learning problems. Teachers and specialists worked together to develop a thorough and easy to use observational checklist to help teachers determine learning profiles of each student. Areas observed included: adaptation to school, social development, large motor development, small motor skills, perceptual development, orientation and interest in books, letters and reading, hearing and receptive language skills and expressive language skills. The purpose of this early identification project was not to label, but to target children who might manifest learning problems in later years, thus providing information to program successfully for these children within their regular classrooms and, hopefully, prevent the manifestations of some learning problems.

Teachers quickly began to feel more confident in determining the different learning profiles of their young students and in providing a modified in-class program to meet the needs of individual students. Specialists in language and reading were made available to the teachers to help them find new materials to use with their students, as well as to create new materials or find new ways to use old ones.

The work of the first three years of the program confirmed the importance of language development in the early childhood years, as well as the fact that classroom teachers can do much to enhance student development in this area. It was also found that children ages three and four indicate as much about themselves as learners by what they avoid as by what they do. Additionally, clusters of strengths and weaknesses noted in early school years are often significant patterns of later learning.

The Kindergarten Year

Next, a screening instrument was developed to look more methodically at each child at the beginning of his or her kindergarten year. Areas looked at in the kindergarten screening included: general information and knowledge, small and grapho-motor skill development, visual perception and discrimination, visual memory and sequencing, spatial organization, auditory memory and processing, verbal sequencing and expression, word retrieval and vocabulary development and articulation, rhyming, blending and segmenting, letter recognition and beginning reading skill level, if any.

The screening provided a systematic way of looking at how each child learns, as well as the child's natural abilities, talents, weaknesses and strategies before he/she began the formalized instruction of reading and writing. This information helped teachers and specialists select the best methods to begin students on the road to successful reading and writing. Information from the screening helped teachers plan individualized programs based upon each child's learning profile, thus developing the best kindergarten program to build upon the individual strengths and weaknesses of each child. It provided an opportunity to examine each child's behavior patterns, strategies, reactions, and approaches to old and new learning tasks. Through conferences about screening results, parents gained a clearer understanding of their children as learners before the panic of "When will my child read?!" set in.

This early identification and intervention program has resulted in children, previously doomed to "fail," who are now experiencing success as learners in the mainstream classroom. More specifically, in a preliminary evaluation of student progress at the end of the second and third years of the project, kindergarten students receiving intervention through

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Gloeckler-Cort, *continued*

teacher consultation. The decision regarding the need for such services is made by the multi-disciplinary Committee on Special Education in conjunction with the parent and other school personnel at the time of the student's declassification. The provision of services is then reviewed periodically in order to assess the success of the student's transition into a full mainstream program.

Perhaps most importantly for the large number of students who continue to receive special education services, recent changes within New York State regulations pertaining to the standards for regular education have emphasized that all handicapped students shall have access, as appropriate, to the full range of regular education programs and services and require that all districts modify instructional techniques and materials to the extent appropriate to provide the opportunity for students with handicapping conditions to meet diploma requirements. This action by the New York State Board of Regents signifies a strong endorsement for the movement toward a merging of the expectations for regular and special education. These changes, which must take place in every school building across New York State, are critical if handicapped students are to have access to the curricula, standards, and competencies of their non-handicapped peers.

As part of an effort to assist educators at the local level in fully understanding and implementing these statewide changes, the New York State Education Department's Office for Education of Children with Handicapping Conditions (OECHC) developed a training program entitled "Expanding Educational Opportunities for Learning Disabled Students". One of the major purposes of this training is to begin to shift clinicians' and educators' attention from a search for pathology within the student to a recognition of the breakdown of educational processes within the school building. This is accomplished in part through the establishment and training of a building level resource team comprised of one to three regular educators, one special educator, the building principal, a school psychologist, and others (e.g. speech therapist, etc.) as available. This team is meant to supplement, not replace, the multidisciplinary special education evaluation team. Its goals and responsibilities are much broader and include attention to the entire educational continuum.

The teams are trained in a range of classroom-based assessment techniques which are designed to focus not so much on the presence or absence of a handicapping condition as on the educational significance of the student's performance given a variety of circumstances. In addition to discussing the benefits and limitations of the commonly used norm-referenced and criterion-referenced instruments, the teams are instructed in the elements of curriculum based assessment as well as in the less familiar area of "process assessment", which explores how a child approaches and responds to the ever-changing environment during a learning task. The team is also trained in the general principles of learning, stressing the elements of sequential teaching (i.e., acquisition - proficiency - maintenance-generalization), and in "proficient teaching" characteristics and techniques across three broad areas: personality/affective teacher characteristics, teacher instructional competencies/skills, and classroom management strategies.

What is most critical about this training is that it stresses the relevance of these principles and skills in understanding and improving instruction for any student, not just one classified as handicapped. Within a school building, the team's goal is not just to assist in the delivery of instruction to individual handicapped and non-handicapped students but to achieve a building-wide acceptance of equal responsibility for *all* students. This means a sharing of resources, including curricular materials and staff development opportunities, and the adoption of a common set of expectations for achievement for the vast majority of our students. These teams have begun to be utilized in schools throughout the state and it is hoped that they will begin to have a significant influence on both service delivery and building climate.

Credit: N. Ivers

Many children can and should be educated in a mainstream school setting.

In the years ahead, as handicapped students progress through the educational system, we need to be as concerned about the effectiveness of services as we are about their availability. Parents and professionals who have learned the intricacies of special education must now become equally familiar with the requirements for regular education. If the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is to guide special students' educational programs toward the mainstream, both physically and intellectually, those developing it must ensure that the stated goals are reflective of regular education standards, and the entire educational community must be committed to working together toward such goals. ■

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Book Review

Smart Kids with School Problems: Things to Know and Ways To Help

by Priscilla L. Vail. New York: E.P. Dutton, $18.95

by Stacy Miller

Ian was an imaginative five year-old who, after two successful years in nursery school, was pleased to be going to the same school as his older siblings. In kindergarten, he learned to decode and write simple words and began to develop a sight-word vocabulary. Ian began to wet his bed, too. School performance, classroom behaviors and the results of a screening test suggested that Ian, though performing in the high middle range of his class, was becoming increasingly anxious and reluctant to take risks. He was among the youngest in the class. The school's recommendation of a second year in kindergarten was accepted after some hesitation by his parents. The following year, Ian's approach to a second screening "was joyful and carefree; his performance was superior." Ian's success in school has led to a "combined program in liberal and medical education at a prestigious university."

Even as a preschooler, Philip was intrigued by science, math and history. He was particularly fascinated by a book he found in his family's library, spending hours examining its anatomical and architectural drawings by Leonardo da Vinci. Imagine his family's consternation when Philip was still not reading by the third grade. Intensive intervention in reading, writing and spelling raised his reading to grade level by the end of sixth grade. Handwriting and spelling continued to lag. In the seventh grade, a sophisticated science project on hibernation, incubation, and migration earned Philip an A. One month later, his science exam was returned to him with the comment, "F, I cannot read one word of this exam." Philip graduated with high honors from "a highly prestigious northeastern university, where he was permitted to use either an amanuensis, a tape recorder, or a portable word processor to take his undergraduate exams." He is now doing graduate work in genetic engineering.

Edna wrote, "I wont too du su orsid. I dot kar if I dy. I rid my bik fast so mabe I get hrt, and I klim to the hiist prt of the tre mabe I wil fal an kil miselff. I dont car. i hate been so dum.' (I want to do suicide. I don't care if I die. I ride my bike fast so maybe I [will] get hurt, and I climb to the highest part of the tree. Maybe I will fall and kill myself. I don't care. I hate being so dumb.)" Her sixth grade teacher marked her paper, "F. For the last time FIX YOUR SPELLING!"

Edna, Philip and Ian are students whose profiles cause author Priscilla Vail to classify them as "conundrum kids." Conundrum kids are the 20 to 30 percent of school children in whom giftedness and disability vie with one another. The narrow demands of a school program may not even tap a student's gifts or other forms of intelligence. What happens when smart kids have school problems? What can be done? Maturation, interventions such as tutoring or pressure on the schools to accommodate a child's needs may have an impact. Vail's exploration of the issues which arise in the education of conundrum kids challenges educators and parents to tackle the puzzle for the good of all. The stakes are high; failure to recognize or solve the puzzle can result in the loss of a valuable resource: some of the potentially brightest, most imaginative members of society. Vail does not leave us without strategies to chart a course toward solution. Her "Principles of Good Practice" and case studies at the end of most chapters offer practical approaches and demonstrate their generally effective application. Vail's clear support and respect for conundrum kids, and her acknowledgement of the problems and areas of vulnerability which beset their parents and teachers lend force to her argument that a positive life experience can be achieved.

After a discussion of the traits and needs of gifted students (a category which she broadens beyond those with high test scores), different learning styles, and possible school problems in the various grades, Vail considers the issues of developmental readiness for schoolwork and grade placement for the young child. Subsequent chapters examine different learning systems on which the student must rely. Vail's presentations of visual learning, motor function, auditory learning, language and psychological availability are accessible to all readers. Her examples and analogies serve to illuminate her meaning for the lay person. Her thorough, yet concise, examination of each system can serve to remind the professional, who has been focussed for example on teaching basic phonics, of other sound practices and techniques and of the larger goals in the process of education. A chapter on testing suggests constructive uses of a system which often undermines chances of success for smart kids with school problems. The discussion of higher education integrates much of what goes before. The final chapter, at its most powerful when we read the subjects' own words, leaves us with an optimistic view of possible outcomes.

Smart Kids with School Problems raises a variety of important questions, many of which are answered, and some of which are not. Vail recommends valuable intervention and management techniques such as tutoring four times a week, maintenance of a master file and the involvement of an educational overseer, someone to skillfully manage the approaches taken at home and in school, keeping the lines of communication open among student, parents and teachers. Most of the children mentioned in the book, however, have parents with adequate educational, emotional and financial resources to take the necessary steps. One is left wondering what becomes of those who are less fortunate. Much of the approach to education which Vail advocates could benefit every student. Although the author exphasizes the urgent needs of the brightest students, why do we overlook the 'average' or non-gifted students? Don't we then risk diminishing their talents? Are we not responsible for helping all children to realize their full potential?

The strength of Vail's discussion of conundrum kids suggests that we question the validity of current educational practices. Why is there not more sensitivity to individual needs? Why do too few teachers know how to address learning differences? Is the focus on test scores healthy? Vail accepts that her audience must work within a flawed system, providing skillful intervention to help conundrum kids compensate and succeed, while building self esteem. Her goal of empowering students, parents and teachers through realistic suggestions may best be met when each party realizes the need for teamwork, the right to question educational approaches and the importance of advocacy on the behalf of all students.

Edna benefitted from a program designed to empower her. Intensive tutoring and modifications in the school program allowed her to discover interests and display her talents. She plans to become either a psychologist or a medical doctor. Edna may be able to help others whose school problems make them "want too du su orsid," because, as she said, she knows "how it feels to hurt." Parents and educators, sensitized by the contents of this fine resource, will be better able to help conundrum kids chart a course beyond that hurt. ■

Stacy Miller is the Library/Media Coordinator for The Churchill School for Children with Learning Disabilities. She is a candidate for an Ed.M in Special Education at the Bank Street College of Education.

Etess, *continued*

the Fisher-Landau Program grew substantially more than other kindergarten children in areas of reading readiness and language development, as measured by a screening of the students' skills.

Teacher Training

The second important goal of the program was that of teacher training. It became clear in the early months of the program that no program of this nature could be successful without a strong commitment to teacher education. In a mainstream program, *every* classroom teacher needs to become a specialist. Thus, schools need to organize themselves to provide teachers with opportunities to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to identify and educate the bright children with learning problems in their classes.

The teacher education program developed in the Fisher-Landau Program at Dalton includes: a planned multi-year in-service program for all teachers; hiring of part-time consultants in the fields of learning disabilities, psychology, and speech and language to work with the teachers, with a clear role definition stating priority on time spent for teacher training; encouragement and support for further graduate study for teachers; model teaching in the classrooms by specialists and consultants; regularly scheduled meetings with consultants/specialists to share ideas, materials and strategies, as well as to consult about individual students; multidisciplinary case conferences to focus on children; regularly scheduled meetings during the school day to discuss topics of professional growth; and development of guidelines for teachers, model lessons and new materials.

This pilot program has assisted the Dalton staff in increasing their knowledge of the teacher/learning process, improved our ability to teach successfully all students in our school as well as better coordinate efforts to offer a more individualized and educationally sound program for students with learning problems.

This program has not made our school the right educational environment for every child. We still identify children in our school population who would benefit from a special educational setting, but we are now able to meet more successfully the needs of a broader range of students, appreciating their talents and not just focusing on their weaknesses. The added bonus of the establishment of the Fisher-Landau Program has been a better education for every child in our school, as a result of teacher education and early identification and intervention.

Although many children have been helped through the establishment of this program, we are just beginning to find answers and ask more questions. We look forward to continuing our work and hope that our efforts will be an inspiration for other educators to take steps towards meeting the challenge of educating children with learning problems in mainstream school settings. ■

SUSAN ETESS is currently the Director of the Fisher-Landau Program at the Dalton School. Prior to assuming this position, she was the Director of the Middle School at Dalton for ten years. She is also an adjunct professor in the department of Supervision and Administration at the Bank Street Graduate College of Education.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

New subscribers are welcome. The **Churchill Forum** is available, at no charge, to anyone interested in learning disabilities. If you are not currently on our mailing list, please fill in and return the coupon below. Feel free to include the names and addresses of interested friends and colleagues.

Do you have suggestions of articles you would like to see appear in the **Forum?** If so please let us know.

The **Churchill Forum** would be pleased to consider manuscripts dealing with topics in the field of learning disabilities. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and not exceed 1200 words. Receipt of manuscripts will be acknowledged. Unaccepted manuscripts will be returned only at the writer's request. Send manuscripts and/or abstracts to: Editor, The Churchill Forum, 22 E. 95th Street, New York, N.Y. 10128.

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Dyslexia "Heroes" Honored For Exceptional Achievement

A Maryland businesswoman, Massachusetts Nobel Prize winner, Minnesota marketing executive, Illinois psychologist, and a Vermont volunteer—all with one common thread of dyslexia—were honored this spring by the Tri-Services National Institute of Dyslexia in Washington D.C.

Federick, Maryland businesswoman **Stephanie Clark,** who still reads on a fourth grade level, is co-owner of a window and door manufacturing company with an annual gross exceeding $3.5 million. **Banuj Benacerraf, M.D.,** Nobel Prize Winner for his work on immune response genes, is president of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. **Michael Tita,** of St. Paul, Minnesota, avoided positions involving heavy reading and writing and climbed the corporate ladder at 3M to become director of Planning Services and Market Development.

University of Illinois Professor and research psychologist **William F. Brewer,** Ph.D., was graduated from Harvard College *magna cum laude.* He had not been able to read by the time he was a senior in high school. A volunteer for 26 years, **Frances Rice,** of Cabot, Vermont, has worked tirelessly for hundreds of dyslexic children and their families. She is chief advocate for the Vermont Association for Children with Learning Disabilities.

The ceremony took place on 30 April. The recipients, all dyslexic, serve as role models for young people now struggling with academic difficulties because of dyslexia.

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Dear Reader:

This issue of the *Forum* raises the question of how to serve the learning disabled student in a mainstream school, in what is known as the "least restrictive environment." Our contributors are professionals in the field who assess schools' ability to deal with learning disabled children, to identify and keep such children in mainstream schools, and to evaluate programs in both the public and independent sector. We think the issue is a timely one and merits your close attention.

Harry S. Valentine III

Harry Valentine
Founder
The Churchill School
for Learning Disabilities

MAINSTREAMING